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ABSTRACT

Developed in response to the report, "Beyond Access: A Reassessment of California Community Colleges," this position paper by the California Community College Trustees (CCCT) presents three reform recommendations for community college governance. After offering support for many of the specific proposals of the report, the position paper states the CCCT's opposition to proposals that would lead to increased costs, decreased community participation, and more bureaucracy. Next, the three reform recommendations are presented, seeking to balance the state's legitimate need for accountability of community college programs with the colleges' need to maintain the flexibility necessary to meet both state and local education priorities. The recommendations are: (1) clearly define governance roles and responsibilities of the legislature, the governor, the Board of Governors for the California Community Colleges, and the local districts; (2) revise the decision-making process to ensure the full participation of those who share responsibility for implementing decisions; and (3) establish a statewide accountability system in which the local districts would be held accountable on a statewide basis as well as in their own communities for their efforts and effectiveness in meeting both state and community expectations. The paper also presents arguments against "regional" governance, and strongly opposes the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education's recommendations for regionalization/centralization, faculty compensation, and collective bargaining. (EJV)

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A POSITION PAPER

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNANCE: THREE REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

The California Community College Trustees' Response to the First Draft of the Reassessment Study of the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNANCE: THREE REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

The California Community College Trustees' Response to the First Draft of the Reassessment Study of the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education

TEN MONTHS AGO, when the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education held its first meeting, commissioners faced the task of conducting a major reassessment study of the California community colleges in less than a year.

To their credit, commissioners have not only nearly completed that task but in the process encouraged statewide discussion and reflection on the major problems facing our state, our local communities and the California community colleges.

The commission has brought to the forefront of California policy discussions the dual challenge educators, government officials and business leaders face today of improving the quality of instruction services at the community colleges while addressing the learning and training needs of an increasingly diverse citizenry.

Again to its credit, the commission's first draft of its study, "Beyond Access: A Reassessment of the California Community Colleges," proposes a number of innovative and forward-thinking steps to address these important issues.

The California Community College Trustees not only supports the spirit of these recommendations but many of the specific proposals, including:

- Reaffirming the colleges as "open door" institutions;
- Reaffirming the basic functions of the mission of the colleges, including transfer and vocational education, remedial education, adult education and community services;
- Recommending the legislature and Governor provide funding and support for assessment, placement and counseling;
- Expanding transfer opportunities for all community college students, including vocational students and minorities; and
- Strengthening the Associate Degree.

The first draft of the commission's report also includes a number of recommendations with direct implications for governance of the colleges. Those that would likely lead to improved student programs and access, CCCT supports. Those, on the other hand, that would lead only to increased costs, less community participation in decisionmaking and more bureaucracy, CCCT opposes.

CCCT believes strongly now is the time for the commission, the legislature, the Governor and the colleges themselves to move forward together with a bold plan for progress that guarantees delivery of quality community college education to all Californians today and in the future.

To that end, some of the commission's recommendations take an important step in the right direction. Meeting that challenge head-on, however, will also require a bold plan for improving community college governance and leadership.

On the following pages, CCCT outlines its proposal for governance reform, a plan based on the needs of California students, their local communities, and the state's taxpayers.

Three Reform Recommendations

Criticism of the community colleges has often been based on a feeling that the underlying reason for their programmatic and fiscal problems was one of governance, or the alleged lack of governance.

This argument has gained favor among those who point out —to some degree correctly—that since passage of Proposition 13, the roles and responsibilities of local district boards and the Board of Governors have blurred, leaving the question of accountability for program success and fiscal responsibility blurred as well.

CCCT acknowledged such a problem existed when it joined the Board of Governors in creating the Joint Governance Commission, a 10-member panel that studied the issue of strengthening leadership roles in California's community colleges.

In the Fall of 1985, CCCT joined with the nine other major community college organizations to study governance and other issues before the Master Plan Review Commission. Much of the work and many of the recommendations developed by the Joint Governance Commission were adopted by the organizations group in its recent paper, "Toward Excellence in the California Community Colleges."

CCCT concurs with the governance findings published in the "Toward Excellence" document, particularly those that speak directly to meeting the needs of students, local com-

munities and the state's taxpayers through governance reform:

> *"The governance structure for community colleges should provide the powers, duties and decisionmaking structures necessary to deliver the mission with excellence and accountability."*

To achieve that goal, CCCT urges the Master Plan Review Commission, the legislature and the Governor to support action to implement the three major governance reforms proposed by the community college organizations group. These proposals balance the state's legitimate need for accountability of community college programs with the colleges' need to maintain the flexibility necessary to meet both state and local education priorities.

NOW IS THE TIME for the commission, the legislature, the Governor and the colleges themselves to move forward together with a bold plan for progress that guarantees delivery of quality community college education

REFORM NO. 1. CLEARLY DEFINE GOVERNANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The governance structure that can best promote excellence in education services and accountability to the state and local taxpayers is one of shared governance in which the legislature, the Governor, the Board of Governors and the local districts all have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Legislature and Governor: Should focus on deciding the broad mission of the colleges, expectations of the colleges, and determining the finance mechanism and appropriate revenues.

Board of Governors: Should provide leadership, direction and general oversight to local districts through establishment of state priorities, formulation of state policy, development of a state budget, establishment of minimum standards and program review and approval.

Locally-elected boards of trustees: Should be responsible for operating districts, local planning and policy formulation, setting priorities for local education programming, budget development and personnel administration.

REFORM NO. 2. REVISE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Higher education governance can be truly effective only when decisionmaking involves full participation of those who share responsibility for implementing decisions.

Legislature and Governor: Should involve the Board of Governors in all deliberations related to community college mission, expectations and finance.

Board of Governors: Working with locally-elected boards, their chief executive officers and faculty leaders, the board should establish a consultation and communication process that emphasizes institutional response in state policy formulation, planning, budget development and program review.

Locally-elected boards of trustees: Working with faculty and other staff, local boards should establish consultation and communication procedures within their districts to ensure district-wide participation in shaping the institutional response provided to the Board of Governors.

REFORM NO. 3. ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The local districts should be held accountable on a statewide basis as well as in their own communities for their efforts and effectiveness in meeting both state and community expectations.

Toward that end, the Board of Governors, working with local districts, should strengthen accountability by implementing the following plan:

- Creation of student outcome evaluation criteria that would be consistent among districts.
- Establishment of local institutional goals based on the statewide evaluation criteria, state education policy and local community expectations.
- Documentation by districts of progress made toward achieving those goals.
- Development of a statewide data base in the Chancellor's Office to document statewide relevant data on the evaluation criteria.
- Issuance of periodic reports and analysis to the legislature, the Governor, local districts and public relative to the academic progress being made by students.

These three steps reflect, in fact, some of the preliminary recommendations of the Master Plan Review Commission. In its first draft report, the commission recommends the Board of Governors be granted increased authority in allocating state support, establishing admission standards, setting statewide minimum competency skill levels and recommends the state board, working with the colleges, monitor the progress of students "to determine if institutions and students are achieving their objectives."

These recommendations, coupled with the three reform recommendations proposed by the community college organizations group and endorsed by CCCT, would, if enacted, strengthen the leadership role of the state board while maintaining for local districts the authority necessary to set local educational priorities.

Why "Regional" Governance Won't Work

Unfortunately, the commission is also considering some governance recommendations that would have the effect of centralizing all important decisions within the Chancellor's Office in Sacramento and reducing dramatically the ability of the local colleges to serve their communities.

These recommendations, which CCCT strongly opposes, include:

Regionalization/centralization: Would consolidate the 70 existing community college districts into 12 and give the state chancellor responsibility for hiring chief executive officers for all 12 "regional" districts. The regional boards would come from the membership of local "advisory" boards appointed by boards of supervisors and would have no legal authority over program, finances or personnel.

Faculty compensation: Would authorize the state board to establish a statewide salary schedule for faculty.

Collective bargaining: Would dissolve current collective bargaining practices in favor of a model designed for a higher education system with a single, all-powerful board of trustees.

The regionalization proposal, while appealing at first glance as a creative solution to the always complex challenges of higher education governance, is actually dangerously flawed. And when compared to the reforms proposed by the organizations group and CCCT, regionalization emerges as an invitation only to increase bureaucracy and management costs and decrease education opportunities at the local colleges.

To make this point clear, the two proposals should be compared side-by-side by asking four questions commonly used by public policy analysts when critiquing proposals for governmental reorganization:

1. *Does the structure provide local citizens with accessibility to and oversight powers over decisionmaking?* For nearly 75 years, a cornerstone of the community college mission has been service to the people in California's diverse and changing cities and communities. Governance of the 70 districts by boards elected locally by the people has reflected a deep-seated belief in California and this country that the best government is local government. Regionalization, on the other hand, would put all power in the hands of a state chancellor headquartered in Sacramento. Local students and taxpayers would lose much influence on local education programs.
2. *Does the structure enhance the quality of the people placed in positions of leadership?* Currently, local trustees reflect the broad scope of California's voting public; women and men of all ethnic groups and political persuasions, laborers, professional people and retired seniors. They share the important commonality of having put their name before the public in order to serve on their local college board. Members of "regional" boards, however, would share only the commonality of being political appointees of boards of supervisors elected to govern counties, not colleges. The question must be asked: What type of people would be appointed to a powerless "advisory" board by highly politicized boards of supervisors?
3. *Is there accountability to the state?* Although both proposals ensure accountability, the effects of each would be dramatically different. Since the state would have a direct line of authority to all chief executives under the regionalization proposal, the long-term dynamics of such a plan are likely to favor centralization of policymaking since pressures for allocations of resources on the basis of uniform rules and adherence to common policy would be strong. The result would be that eventually Imperial Valley College would be run exactly like San Francisco City College since the CEOs responsible for both would be answering to the same state chancellor.

THE OVERWHELMING conclusion of research into the effects of government consolidation is that it leads to increased costs and decreased responsiveness.

The "shared governance" proposal of the organizations group and CCCT, on the other hand, allows local districts to set educational priorities based on local needs and statewide standards and priorities.

4. *What are the cost implications?* The claim that regional boards would save 25 percent in administrative costs is made without documentation. Costs would more likely increase. California currently has only one district as large as the 12 proposed regions and its administrative costs are substantially higher than the statewide average. Additional evidence concerning the consequences of large, centralized systems can be found by investigating the administrative costs of the existing two large, centralized higher education systems in California. Neither is known to be an economical producer of educational services or to have inexpensive administrative apparatus.

Establishing a statewide salary schedule for faculty would also act to increase costs. Such action would require establishing equivalent regional or statewide schedules, inevitably at the level of the highest current salaries.

And finally, many colleges obtain important education, equipment and facility resources from local businesses, foundations and supporters. A regional structure is ill-suited to encourage such cooperation.

CCCT respects the commission's desire to seek bold, even visionary solutions to governance problems. However, for the last 30 years, economists, political scientists, public administrators and sociologists have studied the consequences of restructuring governments and the overwhelming conclusion of this research is that increases in the scale of operations of functions that rely upon personnel for achieving their purposes, such as community colleges, lead to increased costs, decreased levels of service, decreased responsiveness to clients and communities and increased alienation from citizens.

Today, California is moving away from an economy based on agriculture and manufacturing toward one of services and technology, both of which are changing rapidly. Furthermore, the location of employment is decentralizing from the central cities to suburban and even rural locales. At the same time, public finances in California and from Washington, D.C. are stressed.

The proposal to "regionalize" community college governance is not congruent with any of these forces. At a time of rapid structural change, geographical deconcentration, and increasing technological differentiation, such a plan proposes centralization, hierarchy and reduced flexibility. At a time of fiscal limits and the growth of public-private partnerships, it proposes more costly production, increased management and withdrawal from the localities which offer the possibility of effective partnerships.

CCCT urges the commission, the legislature and the Governor to consider recommending and enacting the governance reforms proposed by the community college organizations group.

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